This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 000016

SIPDIS

S/ES-O/CMS, DS/IP/WHA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: AEMR AMED AMGT ASEC CASC HO KFLO
SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA TRIPWIRES - TEGUCIGALPA

REF: STATE 219189

¶1. (SBU) Per reftel A, Post EAC met on 12/28/2005 in order
to discuss Avian Influenza (AI) tripwires and to develop
contingency plans for both "shelter in place" as well as
drawdown of personnel. EAC members in attendance were A/DCM,
RSO, JMO, PC, PAO, PAS, ECON, DAO, MILGRP, MSG, POL, USAID,
CONS, MED, and ORA. Post specific tripwires were formulated
and have been posted on the Tripwire Reporting and Integrated
Planning System (TRIPS) located on the classified network.

¶2. (SBU) The MED Officer advised the EAC that Honduran
medical treatment facilities are extremely limited, and that
in the event of an AI outbreak, they would not have the
capability to effectively deal with the situation. At this
time, the medical resources required to handle any epidemic,
much less AI, are woefully inadequate in the capital city of
Tegucigalpa. The fact that there are only six (6) Intensive
Care Unit (ICU) beds and ventilators in Tegucigalpa
illustrates this deficiency. There are some virology labs
within various medical units, but all of these facilities
have inadequate supplies of AI test kits, if any at all.

¶3. (SBU) MED has consulted with various health care
facilities that are willing to assist the U.S. Mission with
seriously ill patients in the event of an AI outbreak;
however, the EAC agreed that their priorities would most
likely be diverted to their own citizens first. MED advised
that only one facility, Hospital Militar, has actually
offered assistance in formulating a plan of action and a
specific location to treat official U.S. Mission members.
Other health care facilities have not been able to commit
their very limited resources. MED noted that these
facilities may be willing to help if Post could provide
medications and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for their
staff. MED also noted though, that this is not a possibility
as of now, for their own stock of PPE supplies is currently
insufficient (although Post has ordered additional supplies
to help rectify this shortage).

¶4. (SBU) MED advised EAC members that they met with
epidemiologists from the Honduran Ministry of Health and from
the World Health Organization (WHO) in order to assess host
country capabilities in dealing with AI. It was determined
that the ability of the Honduran public health system to
identify and respond to AI cases is severely restricted due
to a lack of nearly all resources - from surveillance and
testing to rapid reporting. MED stated that they have
identified a critical lack of awareness in the Ministry of
Health and other NGOs about this situation. The Embassy has
targeted key medical, political, and agricultural personnel
and has begun educating them about pandemic strategies.
These plans of action can be implemented in order to contain
an epidemic. PAO also advised the EAC that they are
sponsoring the first AI Conference on January 10, 2006.

¶5. (SBU) The EAC determined that Post's ability to shelter
in place is restricted to the lack of facilities, equipment,
and medically trained personnel. Only a limited number of AI
cases could be dealt with, and Post could only maintain this
posture for perhaps one month. MED noted that quarantines in
homes would be a viable option, but the EAC agreed that it
would be difficult to manage a home quarantine situation.
The EAC pointed out that it would be nearly impossible, for
example, to prevent an infected U.S Mission member from
attempting to travel back to the U.S for proper care, given
that resources are so severely limited in country.

¶6. (SBU) In regards to coordination with DOD assets not
under COM authority, the MILGRP representative to the EAC
reported that he, as the U.S. Senior Defense Representative,
is active in Post's EAC and will coordinate with the U.S.
Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) Country Team during any
emergency situation, including the threat of AI.

¶7. (U) POC for Post's AI tripwires is ARSO Robert A. Rentz.
Ford